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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

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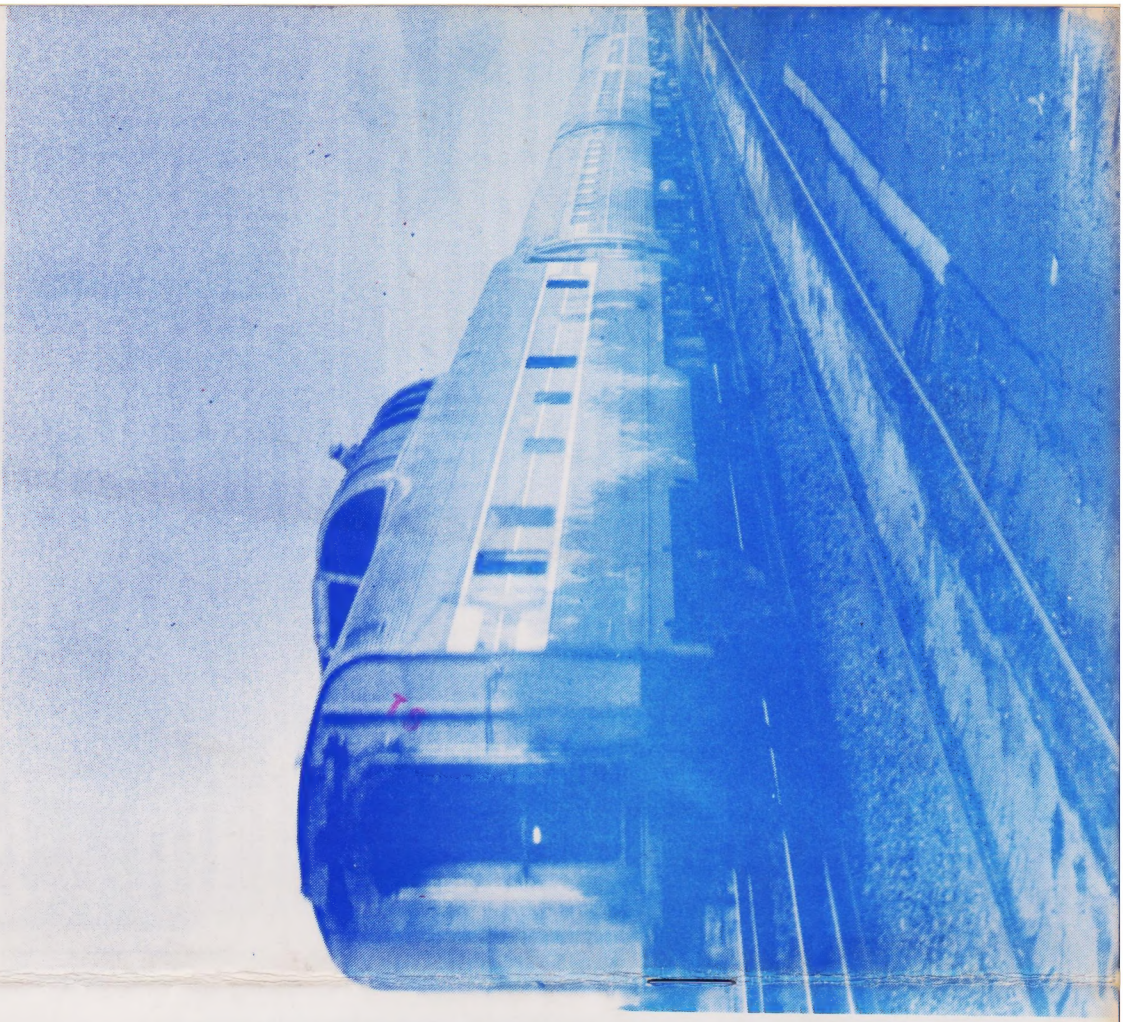

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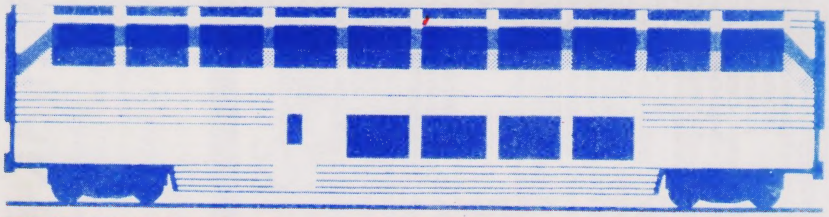

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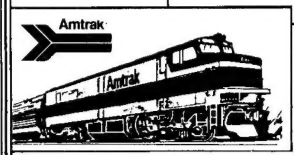

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LETTERS

It is Mr. Andrew Selden, not Amtrak, who appears to have an "irrational fixation" on the Northeast Corridor (RTN 275), and, if I interpret his works correctly, on Amtrak itself. While one can sympathize with his statements concerning the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA debacle, I cannot interpret revival of the AUTO TRAIN as proof of The Great Amtrak Conspiracy. Reviving AUTO TRAIN is hardly a display of contempt for the Western markets; nor is it a self-serving vehicle only for us mean old East Coasters.

Indeed, Mr. Selden condemns Amtrak for adding another long-distance train, something he constantly advocates. Is he begrudging the Southeast its trains? Should only Minnesota and environs be served with more?

Rhetorically, Mr. Selden asks how much business the SILVER STAR and SILVER METEOR will lose. If we implement his own criteria, the answer is "none." If AUTO TRAIN is more expensive than the other Florida trains, and if it's 90 minutes slower (It's carrying freight, Mr. Selden), and if one can rent a car for two weeks more cheaply, then perhaps what Amtrak is seeking is a totally different market. I do not know whether Amtrak will succeed in its efforts, but I can assure Mr. Selden such a market most definitely exists: migratory "commuters" who spend months, not weeks, in the Sunshine State, before returning north with the milder weather.

AUTO TRAIN does, then, fit into Mr. Selden's own stated definition as a long-haul market opportunity, one which may help the corporation further improve its revenue/cost ratio. And since Amtrak's 1983 recovery percentage is expected to improve over 1982's 50.1%, the company, and its "new" train, deserve a chance to prove themselves. Mr. Selden, meanwhile, should indeed continue with his worthwhile suggestions, but preferably without the dazzling display of truculence.

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Published twice monthly by Message Media, P. O. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Subscription $19.00 per year; single copy 80¢. Overseas and institutional rates on request. STAFF: James Russell, Editor. Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large. Regional Correspondents: Peter Putnam Bretz, Southern California; Jack Ferry, Illinois; Adron Hall, Mississippi; Kenneth Maylath, Maryland; Peter Roehm, Massachusetts; Ted Scull, New York.

It is only natural that I, a New Jersey boy, see things differently than Mr. Selden does. I would love to support his efforts for more trains nationwide. But slamming the Northeast Corridor at every opportunity is not the way to win my support, Mr. Selden. *That* is a reality you must face.

Two percent of the nation's land holds 25% of its people, and it is this market the Northeast Corridor serves. Others may wish, in a more perfect world, that passenger train action, like freight, should be centered in America's heartland. It is, for now at least, in the maligned Northeast Corridor, the same corridor which charges full fares—not discounted travel goodies—for many of its passengers.

Douglas John Bowen
Hoboken, New Jersey

THE COVER STORY

On its last northbound run, the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA breezes thru Berkeley in the early morning of October 1, running on time. At the rear of the train is a deadheading dome sleeper, Amtrak car 9220. The dome was being sent from Los Angeles to Sacramento, having been purchased by Mike Barosso, a rancher from Pleasant Grove CA who presently owns a caboose and a box car which are located on his ranch. The dome sleeper is partially burned out, and a number of windows are broken. As the train sped thru Berkeley, the figure of a man was seen standing in the dome, his head and upper body protruding thru the broken top windows. He waved to bystanders as the train moved along. The figure is visible in the photo. Consist of the train was: engines 209 and 245; cars 1127, 2995 "Pine Brook", 2984 "Pine Cavern", 2911 " Pacific Forest", 28305, 21830, 21860, 9220. Photo by RTN.

I fear that the loss of the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA is only the latest of several disasters to hit railroad passengers this year brought on by Amtrak management. If Amtrak had been doing its job and marketing the train, ridership would have been strong enough so that the Governor would never have vetoed it. As it is, if the train were extended to Reno, the train could be self-supporting.

The biggest obstacle facing supporters of an expanding passenger rail system is Amtrak management. There should be a thoro housecleaning of Amtrak, starting with Claytor, Norman and Gall. Amtrak Marketing has been shown up again. First with the CARDINAL and now with the SPIRIT, a lot has been done with a little local advertising. The SPIRIT advertising campaign accomplished more with $14,000 than Amtrak could do with a million for the NEW ENGLAND METROLINERS. Can anybody find anything Norman or Gall has done to justify their existence at Amtrak?

Amtrak's accounting system is designed to cover up the costs of the Northeast Corridor at the expense of its other trains. Because of this, the costs of the other trains, particularly long distance ones, are exaggerated. This causes cost estimates for expansions to be exaggerated, which kills any attempts for such improvements. Without improvements to long distance services, which are money makers for Amtrak, passenger rail services will never become economically viable.

Unless the top people are replaced at Amtrak at Marketing, Planning and Finance, we will see continuous reductions of services and worsening of Amtrak's financial condition. Amtrak has a future only if it is committed to growth, which Mr. Claytor has made clear he is against.

Noel T. Braymer, President
Citizens for Rail California
San Diego, California

RTN 275 was excellent, starting out with Andrew Selden's trenchant critique of the Amtrak marketing department (a charge this organization can verify after 2½ exasperating years trying to charter Amtrak trains at reasonable prices and within time frames

shorter than geological epochs) and finishing up with a lively and informative news section. Selden's essay on idle capacity is also very much to the point.

I particularly enjoyed Jack M. Turner's New Orleans-Chicago travel diary. Revelations of good service in the BUILDER's diner and sleeping cars are most welcome.

There is a tiny error in Turner's notes, however. As most Chicago railfans will be quick to point out, the Amtrak coach yard which the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS crossed over on a bridge was not the "Brighton Park maintenance facility," as Turner claimed. It was the new 14th Street Maintenance Base, where approximately one-fourth of Amtrak's locomotive and rolling-stock fleet is based and serviced.

The Brighton Park facility, now used only for deadline storage, is a smaller yard located on the Southwest Side along the Illinois Central Gulf's ex-Gulf, Mobile & Ohio main line to St. Louis. Brighton Park was built in the early 1970's to service the French-built Turboliners serving St. Louis, Detroit and Milwaukee, and it was closed when Turbo service was discontinued. All Amtrak maintenance in the Chicago area is now concentrated at 14th Street.

Such errors are always possible, of course, given the vast minutiae of the railfan business and the impossibility of nailing down every detail when passing thru cities where one does not live. Please thank Turner for an excellent story.

F. K. Plous, Jr., VP-Passenger Services
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A recent disastrous trip on what *was* a "premiere train," the CRESCENT, was experienced by a friend of mine.

In addition to the train being several hours late each way he took it, the diner experience was terrible, the train crew surly and the attendants obnoxious and made passengers feel they (the attendants) were doing the passengers a favor by being there.

Mr. Claytor had better change the impression that his railroad is just a mode of travel to get from point A to point B.

Airlines would not tolerate such disgraceful and rude attendants, why does Amtrak and why should the passengers?

Hugh Jones, Chairman
Citizens for Improvement of Commuter Rail
Boston, Massachusetts

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

". . . Borie is now only a memory."
—Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg in *The Trains We Rode,* Vol. II, page 852, Howell-North Books, 1966.

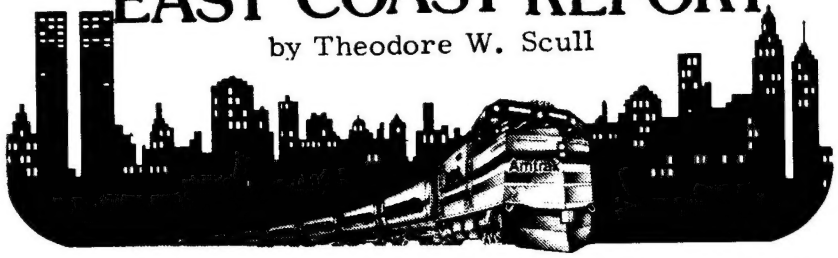
SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB ***

"Amtrak's new Vermont-to-Florida car ferry will make tracks in October."
—Headline in Chicago Tribune, September 18.

(When you're bored of the Florida sunshine, you can take it north for an Autumn leaves tour.)

EAST COAST REPORT

by Theodore W. Scull



New York Governor Mario Cuomo announced on Oct 5 that he had chosen 48-year old Robert Kiley, former head of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, as the new chairman of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The announcement followed weeks of intense speculation in the press. Favorable reactions came pouring thru the local media from all quarters, including Mayor Ed Koch.

Besides running the MBTA from 1975 to 1979—at a profit, no less—Mr, Kiley worked for the CIA, was Boston's Deputy Mayor in charge of public safety, and most recently a consultant on crime and transportation. Only three weeks ago he dropped his bid to run for Mayor of Boston after a poor showing.

The *New York Times* gave him high marks as being knowledgeable about mass transit, politics and government and as "a skilled, energetic and personable administrator." Robert Kiley, who replaces Richard Ravitch, needs the approval of the State Senate to assume the position that now commands a salary of $150,000 in place of the former token $15,000.

Mr, Kiley faces a demanding job with a troubled transit system that is ten times the size of Boston's and an inevitable fare increase on the subways and buses before the end of the year that is likely to rise from the current 75 cents to 90 cents or even $1. Metro North and Long Island Rail Road fares may have to go up by 40-50% in 1984.

In an exclusive interview with *The Times* on Martha's Vineyard, Mr. Kiley said that New York subway riders can expect two to three frustrating years while the system is rebuilt. One *Times* headline summed up the challenge facing him with "Kiley Moves from Back Bay to Front Burner at the M.T.A."

★★★

The Long Island Rail Road became the second local rail carrier in the New York area (after PATH) to begin allowing bicycles on its trains starting Oct 17. Permits costing $5 will be available at ticket booths, and the limit per car will be two cycles, subject to the conductor's discretion. PATH trains have allowed bicycles on weekends with a permit, but in practice I have never seen a bike rider, including myself, turned away by a conductor. There is likely to be little demand for this welcome amenity, however, until later next spring. The LIRR is a vast system, and one has the upcoming winter months to plan the endless touring possibilities.

★★★

New Jersey Transit has announced a special ceremony for the last run of the famous GG1 locomotive at Matawan Rail Station on Saturday, Oct 29 beginning at 9:30am. There will be two special train rides at $1 each behind the GG1, leaving Matawan at 10am and 1pm, with the route believed to be Newark and back. For a flyer, while they last, you may write me at 325 East 72nd St, New York NY 10021. Please enclose a long SASE.

★★★

In Philadelphia, SEPTA's General Manager David L. Gunn announced in September that the Broad Street Subway, once considered dirty, unreliable and unsafe, is now the best service in the city. On Sep 6 the Ridge Avenue Spur re-opened, after 2½ years' suspension, to serve the center-city office and shopping complex around the subway terminal at 8th & Market Streets. Trains run at 11-min intervals during

the weekday peak travel times and 15-min intervals during off-peak hours, and all day Saturday. There is no Sunday service.

The city has 101 new B-IV subway cars and expects the complete 125-car order to be operating by November. The "grand old cars" as they are often called, are being sold for bids averaging $100. The catch is that the buyer has to haul away his 56-ton purchase at his own expense. Thanks to RTN reader E. Everett Edwards for this Philadelphia news.

★★★

I experienced a perfect Amtrak ride to Providence and Boston on Thursday, Oct 6 in connection with the semi-annual Directors' Meeting of the National Association of RR Passengers. The 12:10 6-car YANKEE CLIPPER, with about half the seats filled, left Penn Station right on time. With virtually unlimited visibility, passengers on both sides of the aisle craned their necks to view the magical kingdom of Manhattan during the high-level crossing of the Hellgate Bridge. The ride along Long Island Sound is one that never disappoints, even after scores of trips over the last 28 years.

The train was on time everywhere, the track smooth thruout, and the conductors in a jolly mood. At two locations between New London and Kingston, there was evidence of major bridge replacement work. At Providence I stopped over for three hours to pick up some photographs, then boarded a lightly-loaded and slightly late, by 10 minutes, COLONIAL arriving South Station 10 minutes early—43 miles in 40 minutes with a stop at Route 128.

The southbound trip on Saturday evening was marred by a 30-min late arrival (reasons unknown) back at Penn Station aboard the all-stops BEN FRANKLIN. To allow for the Providence stopover without paying the regular NY-Boston roundtrip fare of $71, I bought a $45 Boston excursion fare (the same as for Providence) and added a one-way $7.90 fare from Providence to Boston. That method was also cheaper than buying an excursion round trip NY-Providence and another excursion round trip Providence-Boston.

During an outing on the North Station-Lowell line, the 1950s-era diesel rail cars that have been rebuilt into coaches pulled by a diesel engine were a joy to ride, being attractive, comfortable and very solid. About 32 of these 30-year old cars, representing one-third of the RDC fleet, have been given the complete treatment by Morrison-Knudsen.

★★★

George Vecsey, a sports writer for *The New York Times,* featured Amtrak in a pre-World Series article entitled "All Aboard for Railroad Series." Quote: "Now we get to find out whether those Amtrak commercials are telling the truth. All those gleaming red, white and blue projectiles spurting along the BosWash Corridor, smiling hosts and hostesses, flowers in glass vases, lots of leg room... It is the closest thing to a subway series we may see in our lifetime, given the state of potential subway contenders like the Chicago Cubs or the New York Mets."

The accompanying photograph was labeled "The Amtak Series," and depicted an Empire Corridor Turboliner. With Mr. Vescey's above conceptions of NE Corridor travel, we may see an interesting post-World Series followup story on this Philadelphia-Baltimore baseball duel.

★★★

While venturing recently over unfamiliar tracks to an appointment deep in Brooklyn, I witnessed a new way to beat the system on the subway during a long wait at the Union Square Station of the LL Carnarsie Line. When the gathering hordes of regular homebound, rush-hour passengers realized that there was trouble on the line, they began boarding wrong-way, inbound trains, for the three stops to 8th Avenue at the end of the line. As the first and second trains finally arrived at Union Square about a half-hour later, they were so packed that virtually no one could board. Several trains passed thru before the crowd, including this lone soul, found a place on the train. The LL local connected with the GG local to my destination, a Victorian-era Brooklyn living room populated by one rabbit, one Chihuahua, 65 cats and their two owners.

MOVING? Be sure to let RTN know your new address as soon as possible. Don't rely on the Postal Service to forward your mail!!

RAIL CANADA

MONTREAL-ST-HILAIRE COMMUTER train continuation and improvement committee has been formed by Transport 2000 Quebec. This train is the only one which is not integrated into the Montreal area transit network. Persons wishing to participate may call 524-6149 or 524-4233 in the Montreal area.

BRITISH COLUMBIA STEAMSHIP Company was unable to come up with any post-season charters for the *Princess Marguerite* on the Seattle-Victoria run and decided to end the 1983 season on the scheduled date of Oct 6, preferring not to extend to Oct 10, the Monday of the 3-day Canadian Thanksgiving Day holiday. A so-so economy and an increasing pressure to control costs are thought to be responsible for the decision.

VANCOUVER NEWS AGENCIES continue to report that the ex-CP Rail mini-liner *Princess Patricia* has been sold, but have been unable to give details about the new owners or the sales price.

CANADIAN POST OFFICE on Oct 3 issued four stamps picturing antique steam locomotives, engines used between 1836 and 1860. One of the four designs is shown here. The stamp denominations are 32, 32, 37 and 64 cents. The designs are also appearing on four post cards. The design shown is of the "Toronto", the first locomotive built in Canada.

A LABOUR UNION, the Canadian Railway Labour Association, has joined the CP in opposing a public hearing on the fatal crash of the Edmonton-Calgary Dayliner which occurred last March. The CTC has asked the Federal Court to rule on whether the former has the authority to call a public hearing into the matter. The engineer and four passengers perished in the crash. Said a union spokesman, "The deaths of passengers and the engineer were tragic, but hauling the employees up in front of the TV cameras won't bring them back." The spokesman did not note whether he thought it would help prevent such future crashes, however.

STERNWHEELER "S.S. KLONDIKE" has been restored by Parks Canada as a national historic site in the Yukon. The historic vessel has been restored to its 1936 appearance, the time when it ran aground during its run between Whitehorse and Dawson on the Yukon River. Tours can be arranged by appointment.

ROGERS PASS TUNNEL project on the CP in British Columbia has received the approval of Federal environmental officials. The plan will see CP blasting 16 kilometers of tunnels thru the Selkirk Mountains in Glacier National Park. The project will eliminate a bottleneck and more than double the amount of freight that can pass thru the Pass. A 14.4-kilometer tunnel thru Mt. MacDonald, about 90 meters below the present Connaught Tunnel, will be built. In addition, a 1.6-kilometer tunnel under the Trans-Canada Highway is planned.

MORE LRC TRAINS areexpected to be delivered to VIA early in 1984 for the Windsor-Quebec City route, part of a $100 million order for 10 more locomotives and 50 passenger cars.

CANADIAN RAIL TRAVEL NOTES

by Tom Higgins

THE INTERNATIONAL was seen in Toronto Union Station this summer with the following consist: engine 6902, Tempo cars 321, 369 and 350. LRC units have been seen pulling Amfleet cars into Toronto at times. So much for the rumor that no Tempo/LRC trains would operate on this run until September. Another myth is that the Tempo cars have no place to sit down to eat like an Amdinette—not true! There are two places to sit with tables, and a takeout counter. The VIA food is a little better than Amtrak's, but VIA table service certainly beats Amtrak's on this run.

RAIL DIESEL CAR 6204 has been modified at the baggage end to accept handicapped passengers. There are now two sliding doors, and a lift at most major VIA stations to lift the handicapped into certain trains which have appropriate modifications.

RAIL DIESEL CAR 6004 is still in CN colours and is used in the Toronto area.

DURING THE SUMMER 10 cars and two engines on the CANADIAN were the norm. In Tor-

onto the train was remarshalled with an additional 8-10 or so cars, along with the diner. Three cars were added in Calgary—two "Manor" cars and a snack coach. On the return trip the process was reversed. Power was run from Montreal-Toronto, Toronto-Calgary, and Calgary-Vancouver. CN power (GM-built) was being used in the Rockies, even tho those units were not built with dynamic brakes.. The usual configuration was A-B-B-B in the Rockies, with some ABBA, and some with an SD 40-2 locomotive leased from the CP.

THE CANADIAN IS still washed in Winnipeg by hand, and by car wash in Calgary. The front domes have Lexan, and are therefore always dirty, scratched or both. VIA management: if you read this, get glass in those windows! You leave a very bad image with most riders about the dirty front dome windows. They are in stark contrast to the clean condition of the rest of the train.

WINNIPEG COACH YARDS have very few spare cars, and many cars are up for sale, including the entire I series, and all Big Domes.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

PONTIAC COMMUTER TRAINS will continue to run at least thru Oct 21. Michigan ARP obtained a temporary restraining order from a Circuit Court judge the week before our press time, with the arguments that state law doesn't provide for discontinuance of the trains, and in fact specifically directs SEMTA to improve the service in the commuter corridor; and that the SEMTA Board of Directors abused its discretion by ignoring subcommittee recommendations for cost reductions. NARP asked rail supporters to help MARP with its fight to save the commuter trains by sending donations to: MARP, Oakland Chapter, 5062 Mansfield, Apt 33, Royal Oak MI 48073.

AC TRANSIT in San Francisco's East Bay will get a new director Nov 1. He is L.A. Kimball, most recently head of the Denver Regional Transportation District, a post from which he was fired by a new Board of Directors six weeks ago. Before that he was with the Maryland DOT and previously with BART. Present director Robert E. Nisbet is retiring after 26 years with the East Bay bus service.

LOS ANGELES SUBWAY will save $30 million by relocating one of its proposed Wilshire Boulevard stations. On Oct 13 the Southern Calif. Rapid Transit District voted to build the station that would have been near the La Brea Tar Pits at the corner of Wilshire and Fairfax Avenue instead, adjoining and partly under the May Co. store, which will share costs of the joint venture. The change also avoids damaging fossils which lie in underground deposits around the famous Tar Pits. Formal adoption of the plan is expected to occur on Nov 10.

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT on Oct 29 will sponsor a "last run of the GG1", with two trains powered by the famous electric locomotives leaving the Matawan rail station at 10am and 1pm. The attractive art deco flyer advertising the event is shown at the right. Printing is in red on white paper. See also "East Coast Report" and "Rail Fantrips" in this issue.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY transit officials signed a contract just before mid-October to buy 50 streetcars from Metro Canada Ltd, at a cost of $48.8 million. Final assembly of the cars will take place near San Jose, where they will be used.

SEATTLE METRO TRANSIT system will cut the price of its monthly passes to reduce patronage declines experienced the last year or two. Also being studied are plans to offer pass riders discounts on merchandise, theater tickets, etc.

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD'S Rockville Centre Station escalator will be out of service a few months after being damaged by vandals early this month.

NEW YORK SUBWAY cars from Japan, the first shipment, were unloaded at Brooklyn Oct 4.

NEW YORK STATE voters will vote on a transportation bond issue in November. The *New York Times* editorialized in favor of the bond on Oct 12: "No one who has sweated in a sealed commuter rail car with broken air-conditioning, or worried that bridge girders are flawed, or stumbled over potholes doubts the necessity of refurbishing New York State's transportation system. Is the $1.25 billion bond issue on November's ballot the way to do it? Some say no, but until they offer a better way, the bonds deserve firm support." One billion dollars will go to highways, with $170 million for railroads and $75 million to marine and port facilities.

WITH ROBERT KILEY coming to New York to run its transit system, the *New York Times* almost had to do a review article of the Boston system, which Kiley headed from 1975 to 1979. Boston's system is the oldest transit system in the US, the paper noted, and the system is currently "recovering and expanding" after some bad years following Kiley's firing in 1979. The article appeared in the Oct 14 issue.

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD andMetro-North Commuter Railroad would be merged under a plan favored by new MTA chairman Robert Kiley.

SAN FRANCISCO MUNI Railway loses $1 million in fare thefts yearly, and a police official announced on Oct 7 the discovery that at least 286 fare boxes had been "rigged" to make them accessible to repeated looting. Police said that no arrests are likely in the case, however. In other Muni news, system officials said this month that they favor dropping a hiring test given prospective Muni drivers because it does not assess intelligence. Chicago officials, who dropped the same test at the time the Muni adopted it, said that drivers using a newer test did better on training for transit operation. The test used by Muni, known as the Chicago Battery, was originally adopted in order to avoid discrimination against minorities in hiring.

PURCHASE OF CONRAIL seems less likely now, as Santa Fe said this month it will delay its bid for Conrail because of the pending merger with Southern Pacific. Some observers believe that Santa Fe is not serious in wanting Conrail, but was using the idea to further its merger plans with SP.

GRAND CANYON LINE SAVED?

The following report is from the National Park Service:

"Railroad Resources, Inc., which proposes to acquire the 63-mile Williams-Grand Canyon railroad, has posted a $40,000 surety bond guaranteeing removal of the tracks within the park should negotiations for purchase fail. The National Park Service has issued a permit to the company with the provision that the tracks must be removed by May 30 of next year if the plan to run trains falls thru. Railroad Resources has made a $335,000 deposit on the $2.95 million purchase price with Santa Fe Railroad. Charles Newman, president of the company, said that in addition to operating the railroad it plans a $20 million resort complex on the route which will 'become to Arizona what Disneyland is to California.' "

☆☆☆

DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS: On page 3 of RTN 275, the location of the excursion was given incorrectly. It was at Sycan, not the West Switchback. In the photo, the train was ready for the return trip to Klamath Falls.

"CHATTANOOGA CHOO CHOO" is the title of a movie in the making, about the last run of the train from New York to Tennessee. Filming will begin in Sacramento CA on Nov 10 for a 2-week period, then move to Hollywood for five weeks. Executive Producer of the film is Phil Borack, who made the 1978 hit "Harper Valley PTA." Budget for the new film is $4.5 million. It will be released next summer.

STEAMTOWN'S PLANNED MOVE to Scranton PA from Bellows Falls VT is the subject of a USA Today article (Oct 3) which notes that the last excursion from Bellows Falls will take place Oct 23, a 100-mile trip to Rutland VT. Bellows Falls will fight hard to keep the Steamtown attraction, but the owners say Scranton will give them a much better deal. The first equipment is expected to be moved by Thanksgiving day. Bellows Falls will find replacement steam equipment if it loses Steamtown.

A Glimpse into the Unknown

BY ANTHONY PERL

Which North American railroad still operates main and branch line mixed trains, runs an "auto-train," and adds a refrigerator car to its passenger runs for the use of moose hunters along the way? One of this continent's more obscure rail passenger operations, the Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railway Co., manages to offer a little something for everybody from the miners and woodsmen it usually serves to the occasional crazy tourist or mileage collector. A trip on the QNS&L is not for everybody; Sept-Iles, the closest this isolated railroad comes to any other part of the North American rail system, is a long way from anywhere and travel both to and within Canads's North Country is not cheap. Awaiting the long distance traveler is a train that can best be described as spartan, ranking below Primera Especial (reserved coach) class in Mexico, but perhaps a shade above Primera.

What then does a ride on the QNS&L have to offer the adventurous traveler? That is just what a friend and I were wondering when we climbed aboard one afternoon in Labrador City, Newfoundland, to ride the once-weekly train north to Schefferville, Quebec. Labrador City, at the end of a 37-mile branch from the QNS&L's north-south line at Ross Bay Junction, produces the railroad's raison d'etre—iron ore. The QNS&L is owned by the Iron Ore Company of Canada which owns just about everything north of Sept-Iles and a good deal of that town too. Trains are needed to haul the iron ore down from the mines, but with the recession, business has been way off. This summer, all but one of the mines along the railroad lay closed.

The train we boarded consisted of one six-axle locomotive, a box car being used to hold baggage, two former CP passenger coaches painted in dark maroon, and about a dozen bi-level auto carriers. Most of the passengers boarding in Labrador City had also shipped their automobiles by rail to a place called Esker, where a 175-mile gravel road of sorts runs eastward to the inland city of Churchill Falls and on to the port town of Goose Bay. This is the only inter-city road in Labrador, hence anybody wanting to move their car into or out of Labrador City has to use the QNS&L auto-train. But unlike the Virginia-Florida Auto Train, prospective passengers must drop their cars off a week in advance of travel to allow time for loading and unloading. Thus, the cars traveling north on our train were those of next week's passengers.

Our coach accommodations looked rustic, to put it mildly. The seat fabrics were well used by generations of dirty boots and showed it. We had been told that the train left at 2pm, and at 3:15 our engine coupled on with a crash that sent the whole train about six feet in the wrong direction. By 3:30 we were finally pulling out of town, passing the airport where a Quebecair 737 was poised at the end of the runway for a takeoff. As we settled into our earthy surroundings, I considered the contrasts between Labrador's two major forms of transportation and could see why most people opted for the plane.

At Ross Bay Junction, the northbound train to Schefferville was nowhere in sight. Rumor was that it would arrive in the next hour or two. Meanwhile, our engine proceeded to cut out the auto-carriers to be switched onto the northbound. Passengers would have to change trains. The town of Ross Bay Junction consisted of several prefab houses clustered around a boulder that was larger than any one of them.

Graffiti had arrived in the Great White North as the boulder was covered with it. Perhaps this was how connecting passengers passed their time here. When the northbound finally arrived, cars were picked up and set off for Labrador City. Then the two trains were brought side by side so we could climb down out of one vestibule and back up into the other.

Our new train consisted of one engine, about 20 freight cars, the auto carriers from Labrador City, and a half-dozen former Southern Railway coaches. How far the once-mighty had fallen! I can remember eagerly sprinting thru these cars at Washington DC, enroute to the SOUTHERN CRESCENT's dining car. Back then, they positively sparkled both inside and out. Each seat back was covered with a crisp cloth antimacassar featuring the Southern Railway's logo. Today, these cars have been transformed into far more basic conveyances to fit their new mission. Three sets of four seats have been removed in the middle and at either ends of the coach to make room for three large oil-fired stoves that are needed to fight off winter's chill. The men's and women's lounges have also been removed from either ends of the cars to made room for huge oil tanks to fuel the stoves. Perhaps the most incongruous change is the galvanized stove pipes that rise thru the ceiling of each coach, puncturing the fluted roofline with a most unstreamlined appearance.

After settling into a foursome of even dirtier and more torn up seats than on our Labrador City train, I set out to explore our new train and its passengers. Fellow travelers consisted ofa mix of miners , natives, and railroad workers for whom the train was the only way to go. Occasionally we would slow from our 59mph pace to discharge someone into the wilderness. As often as not, the passenger would start walking into the wilds and quickly disappear.

Most Canadians smoke, and northern Canadians smoke like fiends, so the air in most coaches was blue with the haze. In the first coach a wall mural at one end of the car depicting a fox hunt over the Carolina piedmont looked down upon a far different scene. Here passengers amused themselves by playing cards, drinking beer, and occasionally spitting into the aisle. We arrived about two hours late into Schefferville after a noisy and smoky ride.

The next morning we boarded the southbound departure to Sept-Iles. The train crew strongly encourages everyone to check their belongings in the baggage car, but since they weren't offering any claim checks or receipts, we declined. This southbound train on a Friday ran much closer to schedule, stopping mainly to pick up railroad maintenance of way crews on their way home for the weekend. From our much less smoky car, we were better able to appreciate the scenery, ranging from expansive woods and lakes to a spectacular dam-waterfall and a climb thru a mountain range at the southern end of the line.

The food service on the QNS&L is provided from a snack counter in one of the coaches and makes the darkest days of the Amcafes look good. As I tried to peel the melted plastic wrapping off a "submarine sandwich" that fully confirmed Mr. Claytor's analysis of microwaved bread, I dreamed of what it would be like to have a Calzone and Haagen-Dazs ice cream instead. Even with our own food to dilute the ill effects of the train's cuisine, I managed to pick up the worst case of heartburn I'd had since Mexico City. In retrospect, travelers are well advised to bring all their own food and check it, if necessary, with the moose in the refrigerated baggage car.

We pulled into the outskirts of Sept-Iles about 30 minutes early and just as I was preparing to end this trip ahead of schedule, we stopped on the edge of the QNS&L yard while our engine cut off the freight cars and 200 passengers waited patiently. After arriving on time, we detrained with both a sense of relief and accomplishment.

Labrador is the last area of North America that has not yet been fully explored, let alone exploited. A train ride thru its vast interior can give the traveler a true sense of the wild emptiness that climate and geography have guarded for so long. But the QNS&L is no RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR of the North. Ninety-nine percent of the people who ride it do so because they have no other choice and the train itself reflects these very basic standards.

The QNS&L provides transportation and little more, but for an adventurous traveler this trip can be a satisfying glimpse into the unknown.

Who Killed The Spirit Of California?

BY WILLIAM MOORE

BILL WEBER, SP:

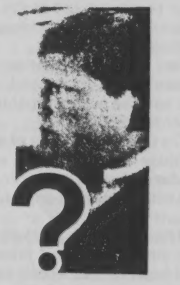
Was His Firm's Opposition To Passenger Service The Clincher

ADRIANA GIANTURCO, EX-CHIEF, CALTRANS:

Should The Least Likely Suspect Be Discounted

ART LLOYD, AMTRAK:

Why Didn't His Team Ride To The Rescue



DANA REED, DUKE'S AIDE:

Did SP's $10,000 Contribution Carry That Much Weight

The passengers came crowding into the restaurant car and took their seats round the tables. They all bore more or less the same expression, one of expectancy mingled with apprehension.

— Agatha Christie,
Murder on the Orient Express

FOR THE MOMENT OF TRUTH in *Murder on the Orient Express*, supersleuth Hercule Poirot assembled all the suspects and then — voila! — revealed who killed the hapless M. Ratchett.

In a real-life whodunit, Forum invited a group of likely suspects to meet on a club car parked at the Amtrak-Southern Pacific depot in Sacramento. The mystery to be solved: Who killed the train we were aboard?

For as of yesterday morning, there was no more Spirit of California, the sole overnight passenger service between Sacramento, the Bay Area and Los Angeles.

Known affectionately to its crews as The Medfly because it started running in October, 1981, when that pest dominated the news, the overnight express was scratched from the state budget and the tracks by Governor Deukmejian's blue pencil.

So the governor did it? Not so fast. True, he was caught with the smoking pencil, but there's more to this mystery than that. In fact, only a few minutes after the lounge car guest arrived, they began pointing accusatory fingers at each other.

The participants:

Dana Reed, the state's burly deputy secretary of transportation.

William Weber, assistant to the vice president of the Southern Pacific Transportation Company — the outfit whose tracks provided the route for the state's train.

Art Lloyd, the silver-maned West Coast director for Amtrak, the federal corporation which operated the train and anteed up some of the initial funding.

Adriana Gianturco, who, as Jerry Brown's Caltrans director, was responsible for launching The Spirit.

"Yes, you have something to tell us," said Poirot firmly. "The truth! Mais oui. It may be that I know it already. But it will be a point in your favour if it comes from you spontaneously."

Murder on the Orient Express

BORROWING from Agatha Christie, Forum started the session by asking, point blank: Who killed The Spirit of California?

Dana Reed, the governor's point man on railroad matters, led off.

"Well," he said, raising his voice to be heard as a freight train rumbled by, "I think the reason the train is ending . . . is that the people who are traveling between Sacramento and Los Angeles have demonstrated that they would prefer to fly or take the bus or drive . . . ."

The next to speak was Bill Weber of SP:

"I would generally agree with Dana that the patronage that was originally envisioned for the train hasn't developed either out of Sacramento or out of the Bay Area to justify the subsidy that would be required to run the train. And, of course, both the Bay Area and Sacramento continue to have the Coast Starlight down the coast (with a 6 a.m. departure from Sacramento on the same route as The Spirit) and two San Joaquin trains a day with a bus connection between Sacramento and Stockton (and Bakersfield and Los Angeles)."

Now Art Lloyd of Amtrak:

"I think it's a combination of several things. One, I don't think the train has had an adequate chance. It was started in October, '81. We went into a recession the very next year. Ridership nationwide on all forms of transportation was down. We had low-price gasoline which contributed. The No. 1 competitor of Amtrak is not the bus, and it's not the airplane; it's the private automobile.

"This year the train has shown an increase in ridership. It was up some 30 percent in August (over the same month last year), carried 726 people on the Friday before Labor Day; but today when I came up on it, we only had 70 people. I think the train deserved a little better chance."

Adriana Gianturco:

"Well, this is all well and good. But it's very clear and very simple who killed the train, and that's the Deukmejian administration, which announced shortly after it came into office that it planned to discontinue this train as well as the Oxnard train (an LA commute service). That administration received large campaign contributions from Southern Pacific; and it carried through on its stated intent, and that was to kill this train.

"I agree totally with what Art said . . . it was never given an adequate chance. . . . The basis used for stopping it is obviously a coverup for something else that was going on, in my opinion.

"I think the great tragedy of this is that it's extremely difficult to start new rail service any place. To start this train was four years of concerted effort on the part of Caltrans and various people who were interested in improving rail passenger service in this state. And with literally a stroke of a pen, it was killed."

THE OPENING ARGUMENTS were over. Now it was time for a witness. His name was John Kirkwood, vice president of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP is the acronymn for this consumer lobbying group) and vice president of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District.

He peered at the others and declared solemnly:

"I think all of us feel that Amtrak treated this train from the beginning like an unwanted child, did not promote it, and, in fact, in those cases where Amtrak wants to have route-specific advertising they do. They just spent a fortune on New England Metroliner Service. Unfortunately, the nature of a 403-B train (a train started and subsidized largely by a state) is that Amtrak doesn't want it in the first place. It's being essentially foisted on them by the state, and as long as the state is willing to pay the tab it will go forward.

"But in this case, being the farthest train away

A few days before its demise, the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA on Sep 29 waits northbound at Oakland. On this occasion engine 204 was pulling a baggage car, two sleepers, Amlounge and two Amcoaches, the normal consist during the train's final days. Photo by Paul Rayton.

from Washington and starting as a new train ... I really think Amtrak, if it didn't ignore it, it certainly didn't spend the time and effort it should have spent to try to bring the ridership up and to keep costs down. Or to modify it so that it went to Reno or did something that would have improved its market. This train has run on essentially the same schedule all the way through, and no experiments were undertaken to really reach out and really try to get the market up to a point where the train would reach a reasonable rate of return.

"So I tend to put a heavy burden on Amtrak's indifference to the train. And to some extent I think the state has had some culpability."

GIANTURCO:

"On this questioning of marketing, which I think is crucial — as I recall, last year in the budget proceedings for Caltrans, we got in the budget something like $150,000 to market specifically the Spirit of California....

"I have seen no marketing ... none ... zero on this train since January. I think, in fact, this may be illegal. I believe that what's happened here is some kind of impoundment of the marketing funds that occurred under the Deukmejian administration, and that has to be a major, in my view, factor in why this train has not caught on better than it has. I think the really amazing thing is that the ridership has increased this past summer in the absence of any marketing whatsoever."

DANA REED, THE DEUKMEJIAN APPOINTEE:

"We don't believe in beating a dead horse. And the fact of the matter is — and notwithstanding the four years that Ms. Gianturco worked in getting this train started, four years of planning if you will, and 15 months of actual operation of the train — the fact of the matter is when we took a look at this service in January and February of this year, the ridership was so low and so dismal that the conclusion was made that we could not support continuation of the taxpayers subsidy of this train.

"We're talking for fiscal year '83-'84, we're talking approximately $5 million of state taxpayers money. We're talking about $5 million for a service which averaged about 19 people a day between Sacramento and Los Angeles. That's not very many people to spend ... There were more people that got on and off in Sacramento than there were that got on and off in Oakland, for example. Substantially more, as a matter of fact.

"We were faced with a situation of what to do with the $5 million that Ms. Gianturco and others wanted us to spend on this train. And we determined that, in our opinion, a more appropriate place to spend that money would be in projects such as Sacramento light rail, such as metro rail (in Los Angeles), such as Guadalupe corridor in San Jose, such as the extension of the light rail in San Diego, such as the extension of the SP commute lines from 4th and Townsend to downtown San Francisco. We felt, in terms of priorities, spending $5 million of state money so that 19 people from Sacramento, and I'm dwelling on Sacramento because this is an interview for The Sacramento Bee, so that 19 people a day can get from Sacramento to Southern California, was totally inappropriate.

"I think it was ironic and almost irresponsible for the spokesperson from Amtrak to sit here and tell us that the train wasn't given a chance. The first year when this train started, the state paid 20 percent of the subsidy and Amtrak picked up 80 percent. The second year that changed to where we picked up 35 percent and Amtrak picked up 65 percent. Now if this train were to run after October 1, Amtrak is telling us that the state has got to pick up 65 percent of the subsidy and that they will only pick up 35 percent. And for them to sit here, and the spokesman from Amtrak to sit here and say that the train wasn't given a chance and somehow the State of California is negligent or derelict in not giving it another year when they have reduced their subsidy year after year after year to the point where it's totally flipflopped, I think is totally irresponsible and I don't appreciate those comments at all."

AMTRAK'S ART LLOYD:

"I was asked, Mr. Reed, for reasons, and I was elucidating a number of reasons, one of which is — and you will hear this, I'm sure, from others as well — that it really wasn't given the three-year chance it was suppose to have as set up originally.

"And I will have to argue that 19 passengers is not the average for the train. That is playing with figures such as Secretary of Transportation Coleman did when he said that only 15,000 people rode the Coast Starlight from Los Angeles to Seattle. That's true in a given year. That's how many sat on board at Los Angeles and got off at Seattle (but the Starlight stops at scores of places in between and is often sold out with an average of more than 300 passengers per run). I think you'll find that the average for this train (The Spirit), even in January and February ... was more in the 50, 60, 70 range, which is still not acceptable, I agree. It's not acceptable from a fuel-efficiency standpoint or from a cost-efficiency standpoint."

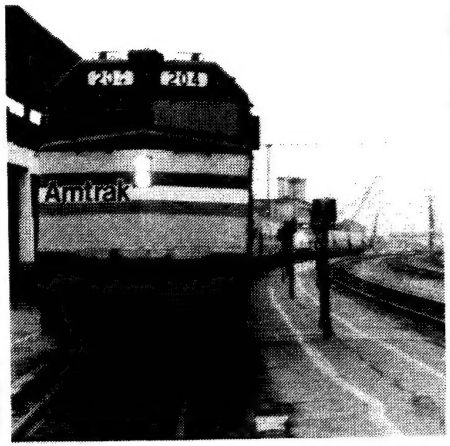
GIANTURCO: "As far as I can determine, you stopped the marketing in January, which an administrative person does not have the right to do. I didn't have the right to stop something that was already in the law."

REED: "We chose not to waste the money."

GIANTURCO: "Well, I could have decided that with the highway project, that I think it's a waste of money. But if it was in the law, I did it."

AMTRAK'S LLOYD: "The (federal) law as exists under which we run 403-B (state trains) means we put up 80 percent of the money for the first year and it goes down scale to this last year .... So three years has been the normal acceptable period in which you figure a passenger train is going to make it or break it. ... I'm saying this to you as somebody who has been in this business since July 1, 1942, in the passenger business. And I have followed successes."

GIANTURCO: "The San Joaquin run (Stockton to Bakersfield over the Santa Fe Railroad) is now being given by the Deukmejian administration as a contrasting kind of service. And the fact is it had two years' experience with about the same recovery of costs as the Spirit of California. The ratio of the percentage of costs covered by revenues was approximately the same during the first two years of the San Joaquin."



Paul Rayton photo.

DANA REED: "The state's austerity needs are great. It disturbs me to think there is room and more to fund all of these projects."

GIANTURCO: "The transportation, planning and development account has enough money to fund this train for the next five years. I think something else is going on here. It's not quite above board to say there's not enough money for the train.

"I see none of this emphasis on the finiteness of resources when it comes to the highway program. The projects I've observed have been bailouts beyond belief. The causeway on I-80 to Davis was six lanes. Now it's going eight lanes, tripling the cost. Anyone who drives that knows it's unnecessary.

"Remember — $5.2 million, the Spirit's current deficit, is what it costs to build just a half mile of freeway. There's something very inconsistent and incongruous about this administration.

"The Southern Pacific has been dead set against this train from the beginning. They fought it tooth and nail. This train represented something very threatening to them. It took four years of arbitration with them to get the train into operation on their tracks. SP resisted every step of the way.

"The arbitration panel found in favor of the train, and SP finally agreed to run it if the schedules were changed so the departures would be at a later time. The result was that we missed the Bay Area market (with a departure of 9:40 p.m. from Oakland)."

SP'S WEBER: "We're not biologically opposed to passenger trains. We're certainly not opposed to the train's current operation."

GIANTURCO: "That's because it's stopping." (A bon mot.)

WEBER: "Overall on the coast route our volume of freight service is between Oakland and San Jose and Oxnard and Los Angeles, and our problem is that we only have a single track railroad from Oakland to Burbank ... so once a train is off schedule, the other trains have to take changes in their instructions. It's very difficult ... what with short sidings and longer and longer freight trains."

GIANTURCO: "Well, all that was thoroughly aired before the aribitration panel. SP even screwed themselves during the hearings by putting a freight train in the very time slot they said would be impossible for any train."

KIRKWOOD, THE RAIL CONSUMER ADVOCATE: "Amtrak has been a substantial source of revenue for SP. The SP has even been provided with incentive payments to bring the Spirit in on time, and that's with a schedule padded by 42 minutes. SP, though, has operated the train very well."

WEBER: "We're not opposed to a train when we don't have to bear the burden of the cost. The only place, however, we make a buck is in freight service."

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH was fast approaching. It was time to sum up the cases against the various suspects:

• First, the people of the state of California — who Reed and Weber said were responsible for the demise of The Spirit. Kirkwood, the advocate, disagreed vehemently. "When the people knew about the train," he said, "they used it. I don't think they rejected it." Still, it's difficult to dispute the fact that the train's ridership had been — until the last few months — dismal.

• Second, the unlikely Adriana Gianturco. Forum's sleuth had to make this case by himself. Why, he asked, didn't she win early on some sure-fire revenue for the train — like a contract to carry Package Express? "I made a lot of phone calls," she protested. "I visited various congressmen to try to get mail on the train. I did my best."

Well, then, why didn't she encourage state employees to ride The Spirit? "I agree," she said, "but it's difficult. State travel is so uncoordinated, and state employees can't get reimbursed if they take the train." Hmmmm.

"It's true, though," she added, "it would be no more expensive than the plane."

"That's not accurate," said Reed. "If you have a meeting in LA and you take the train down, it requires two full days of per diem."

"Not," said Gianturco, "if you use the train as a hotel the first night and fly back at the end of the next day."

(The Spirit's one-way fare for a coach seat: $57. An additional $47 for a room and bed with bathroom facilities. The airline coach fare: $59.)

"I guess I'd take the train when someone else pays for it," Reed allowed.

We were about to stumble upon Dana Reed's little secret. "Mr. Reed," asked Forum, "have you ever ridden The Spirit?"

"Yes."

"How often?"

"20 times." Pause. "I found it very convenient between Glendale and Oakland, before I took this job in Sacramento." Pause. "Besides, I happen to enjoy it."

Reed blushed and proceeded to stare at his shoe, for a spell, it seemed.

• Next suspect: Amtrak. A lot of nagging questions pop up here. When Forum's sleuth called Amtrak reservations for information on what Sacramento-LA service was available, why on three occasions did the agents fail to mention even the existence of the overnight train? Why didn't Amtrak market The Spirit the way it has the East Coast trains? Why didn't it put on the more economical and comfortable sleeping and coach equipment that runs routinely in the East? And, rather than the sterile little cluster of tables jammed into one end of a tiny tubular coach, why was there no real club lounge with an attractive bar? And a dining car instead of a cramped sandwich counter?

"Trying to get them to do things on the West Coast was like pulling teeth," said Gianturco.

"It was," said rail advocate Kirkwood, "the unwanted train."

"I wouldn't say unwanted," replied Amtrak's Lloyd, "but, I agree, the marketing was not all that it should be."

• Next suspect: the Deukmejian administration. Did that $10,000 corporate contribution from SP to the governor's campaign last year help kill The Spirit?

"I know nothing about it," said Dana Reed, "and I can assure you that in our deliberations the subject of campaign contributions was never once even remotely brought up, suggested or in any way discussed, and I had no knowledge that Southern Pacific contributed to anybody."

The governor, he said, killed the train last March after "we looked at the ridership ... and we made what we think is a responsible, business-like decision to not renew the contract with Amtrak."

Certainly, to attribute, apriori, the axing of a train to a campaign contribution would be to indulge in that classic logical fallacy: after the fact, therefore because of the fact.

Still, it is curious this administration acted so early and so swiftly to kill The Spirit, without any effort to experiment by cutting its costs and marketing it. And without even investigating the lucrative potential of extending the train's run to Reno — between there and here on SP, Amtrak's California Zephyr is often sold out, especially in winter when the transportation alternatives are unattractive.

•The final suspect: SP. It is no secret SP has a long record of steadfastly opposing passenger trains, including The Spirit. But why these days, especially when the financially troubled rail giant is making what it concedes to be a reasonable amount of money from Amtrak's use of its tracks? In addition to the $1.2 million annual bonus the state's paid it for running The Spirit on time, it has received all sorts of improvements on its right of way, compliments of the taxpayer.

As one Caltrans employee, insisting on anonymity, noted: "It's almost an irrational thing with them, and they've been at it so long. An SP executive once confided to me his real fear was that Amtrak trains would really become successful, that one passenger train would lead to two passenger trains and then more — and the next thing you know, the freight trains would be hassled and maybe the government would even try to run their railroad. It's an understandable fear."

SP's Weber asked to set the record straight on that corporate contribution to Deukmejian. "We regularly make contributions to candidates running for public office at all levels of government, to the extent we are allowed to by law," he said. " . . . we would make our views known . . . but it would never be a letter accompanied by a check or telephone call or anything implying that it was a quid pro quo."

He acknowledged his firm paid to have members of the California Transportation Commission take a rail tour of the Oxnard-LA line as an effort to present SP's case against commuter service on its tracks. The commissioners sided with the SP on that one; so did Deukmejian. The Oxnard commute train went the way of The Spirit. And SP private rail cars — bearing guests — were in Sacramento earlier this year for the governor's inauguration.

ALL RIGHT, we have plenty of suspects. So which one killed The Spirit of California? They can't all have done it, can they?

Art Lloyd of Amtrak best answered that question:

"If you've seen *Murder on the Orient Express*, you know that not one person or one thing was responsible for the murder on the train. There was a combination of circumstances . . . a combination of many things."

Okay, we're giving away Agatha Christie's story line. Inspector Poirot spelled it out to his group of assembled suspects on the Orient Express: *"They were all in it . . . I saw it as a perfect mosaic."* Each of them, Poirot announced, had lined up and stuck the knife, one after another, into the victim.

And that's what happened in our real-life whodunit. A lot of people killed The Spirit of California. Only this time, some of them had plunged the knife more deeply — much more deeply — than others.

Well, our session was running close to the departure time of the train. After we trooped off the car, a lugubrious porter walked up and asked me: "Are they going to save The Medfly?" Nope, I said.

Soon, the conductor was shouting, "All aboard! Boooaa-erd!" And The Spirit was rolling out of the depot on one of its last journeys. It was a train that kind of grew on you, a little train that really could. Too bad so few people rode it — or even knew about it.

Reprinted with permission from the Sacramento Bee (Oct 2). William Moore is editor of the Bee's Forum section.

☆☆☆

of Sep 1 there were 228 Amtrak stations staffed with Amtrak staff, 88 staffed with railroad people, and 191 unstaffed stations. Amtrak said that decisions to unstaff individual stations were made partly on objective data—number of average sales—and partly on other considerations, including times of arrivals and departures, availability of travel agents in the area, etc. Amtrak noted that it is untrue, altho it has been alleged to be so, that initiation of the on-board train manager and chiefs program was responsiblefor cutbacks in station personnel.....

★★★

AMTRAK'S OCTOBER TIMETABLE was available at most Amtrak locations by about the weeknd of Oct 8. However, we do not yet have one at hand as we go to press. The cover of the new timetable, effective Oct 30, is said to be blue, with a picture of Amtrak F40 locomotive 341 with "All Aboard Amtrak" superimposed on it, as with the previous, Apr 24, timetable. The timetable contains, for the first time, two ads concerning Operation Lifesaver, the project to educate the public about the dangers of grade crossings. Amtrak has also just published a slick-paper folder (shown here at the right) about its fares. Sample fares are given for most (if not all) routes in the system, and excursion fares and discount plans are explained. Sample fares were formerly published in the system timetable, and publication of them in a separate folder such as this is unusual. The brochure is printed in shades of blue and gold.....

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL ROADSHOW, formerly known as Amtrak Family Days, came to Portland OR on Oct 8 and 9. About 30,000 people attended, Amtrak said. The exhibit was similar to previous Roadshows. A one-hour rail excursion was offered several times each day, at a fare of $3 for adults and $1 for children.....

AMTRAK BOARD MEETING coming up on Oct 19 has reportedly nothing very exciting on the agenda. There is one commitment approval request for bridge work in the NE Corridor and one for about $2 million for continuation of Michigan track upgrading.....

★★★

SAN JOAQUIN SPECIAL roundtrip fare between the S.F. Bay Area and Los Angeles is being offered now and thru Dec 15, Amtrak said in a Sep 30 announcement. The roundtrip costs $7 more than the special one-way fare of $48. The trip includes the connecting bus link between Bakersfield and L.A., between S.F. and Oakland, and connecting service from Sacramento to Stockton and Hanford to Porterville, Amtrak said.....

THE SILVER PALM has a special roundtrip fare from Sep 30 thru Dec 15 between Miami and Tampa—only $5 more than the one-way fare of $39.50. The 255-mile, trans-Florida service includes connecting bus links from Miami Beach and Bal Harbour in the east to Clearwater and St. Petersburg in the west; and in mid-Florida, to Walt Disney World, Sea World and Cypress Gardens.....

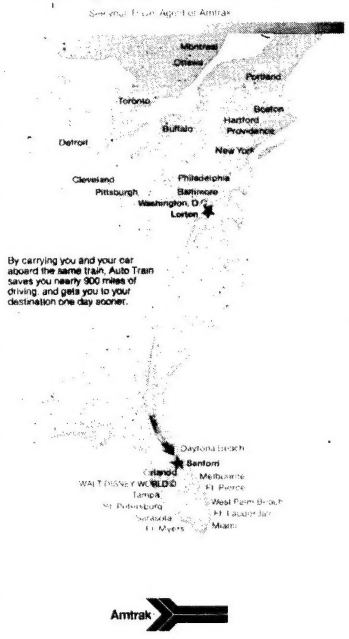
THE CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR eliminates the following stops effective Oct 30: Monmouth IL, Bond CO, Rifle CO, Green River UT, and Carlin NV. As noted previously, the train as of Oct 30 moves to the Western Pacific (Union Pacific) line between Salt Lake City UT and Winnemucca NV, no longer using the SP crossing of the Great Salt Lake. The WP line runs south of the lake. Thus the train will no longer operate thru Ogden. The PIONEER will be the only train still serving Ogden. The move to the Rio Grande rather than the UP station in Salt Lake City will not come with this timetable change, but is deferred for a while; some track work must be done first, Amtrak said. Elko NV has two train stations, one for the train in each direction, as the tracks are some distance apart. Amtrak says there has been some confusion about

the locations there, as the eastbound (WP) station has been moved a ways southerly, out of town.....

CORRESPONDENT ADRON HALL says he didn't like the Amtrak bumper sticker which reads "Maybe your next flight should be on a train", and he undertook to change it to the message shown at right by judicial trimming. The resulting sticker is mounted on the rear side window of his car.....

★★★

THE AMTRAK SERIES was what a *New York Times* writer dubbed the World Series this year, as recounted in Ted Scull's column (page 6). More because of this than due to actual rider demand, Amtrak put on some special baseball trains. The media expected it of them, and they couldn't let them down. (The idea was picked up by a number of other newspapers as well.) Amtrak ran on the evenings of Oct 11 and 12 a Baseball Extra from Philadelphia to Baltimore and return. It left Philly at 5:15pm, Wilmington 5:38, arriving Baltimore at 7pm. Chartered Maryland transit buses took passengers directly from the train to Memorial Stadium. Returning, the train left Baltimore 75 minutes after the last "out" of the game. Ridership was light—about 80 on each train, but Amtrak said it broke even and even better, it aroused good publicity for the rail corporation. On Oct 14 it ran a train Philadelphia-Washington and return, returning again 75mins after the last out. The return trains were so late that the last passenger train of the day had already left—the NIGHT OWL. Amtrak said that if the World Series went to 6 or 7 games it would run Philadelphia-Baltimore roundtrip specials for the last games. The special trains it ran consisted of four coaches and an Amcafe each. They were diesel-powered with two back-to-back F40 locomotives. This was because after the NIGHT OWL has passed the Corridor is de-electrified to permit maintenance of way work. Engines were back to back because they can't be turned in Baltimore. Besides the special trains, there was more space added to regular "prime time" trains, and Amtrak was waiving the roundtrip excursion fare blackout 1-7pm Friday and Sunday between Washington and Philadelphia.....



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AUTO TRAIN ROUTE MAP in a simplified version is shown here, as it appears in Amtrak's recently-issued AUTO TRAIN brochure. The new service begins operation on Oct 30.....

AN INSPECTION TRAIN was run by Amtrak from Kansas City MO to Omaha on Sep 28 and back on Sep 29. Itran first on the BN via St. Joseph MO, then back on the MoPac via Atchison and Leavenworth. Consist of the train was one Amtrak F40 locomotive, Amtrak coach and BN business car—the same consist both days. Midwest rail supporters are hoping that the long-sought connecting route will be implemented soon. As the Missouri-Kansas Rail Passenger Coalition notes, "The Kansas City-Omaha link would allow direct service from Kansas City and St. Louis to Denver, Salt Lake City, Reno, Sacramento, Oakland and San Francisco via the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR; to Pocatello, Boise, Portland, Tacoma and Seattle via the PIONEER; to Las Vegas via the DESERT WIND; also a second daily train to Los Angeles.....

TRUCKEE, CALIFORNIA STATION reportedly has money available from local sources for rebuilding or renovation.....

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA STATION on Main Street, closed since 1975, was badly damaged by an arson fire the night of Oct 7. The fire, spotted about 7pm, heavily damaged the top (fifth) floor and part of the fourth, along with the roof. Officials said that planned reconstruction of the station into a restaurant-shopping mall will be able to proceed, however. A $10 million refurbishment has been planned, with over 70 shops and restaurants. The picturesque clock tower of the building was saved.....

AMTRAK AUTHORIZATION BILL in the Senate could have an undesirable amendment pinned to it, authored by Republican Senator William L. Armstrong of Colorado, stating that it is the "sense of the Senate" that Amtrak become self-sufficient by 1985. NARP warned that Amtrak would be "completely wiped out" if such a principle ever became established as a legislative mandate. Amtrak is steadily improving its revenue/cost ratio, from 38.3% in 1978 to 53% today (better than most transportation systems; for example, Washington Metro is aiming for 47%). Said NARP, "Amtrak does not need pressure to further raise its fares, making the system still less relevant to the public's needs." There is little chance that the amendment will be adopted by the Senate, NARP said, but if any support outside of Sen. Armstrong himself is gained in Senate floor debate, which will take place no earlier thanOct 20, it would make it easier for such an amendment to be introduced again later. NARP urged rail supporters to contact their Senators, urging them to speak and vote against the amendment. In the House, a fiscal 84 revenue/cost ratio of 55% is in the bill (H.R. 3648) before the Commerce Committee. NARP says Representatives should be instructed to oppose it, as if it were passed it could complicate life for train service if the economy became weak again.....

★★★

NEW SERVICE PROJECTS report came from Amtrak President Claytor to NARP President John Martin in an Oct 4 letter:

■ *Oklahoma service study will be finished by late November, and Amtrak will be ready to make a final decision before the April timetable changeover time.*

■ *Mobile-New Orleans service: (planned starting date May 1984)–There is "every indication" that Amtrak will shortly receive favorable replies from Louisiana and Missouri on state funding for the train. Alabama has already okayed its funding.*

■ *Kansas City-New Orleans service: appears feasible given certain assumptions. Amtrak will talk soon with ICG and state of Missouri to assure Amtrak's operating assumptions can be met. Depends partly on state's allowing Amtrak to adjust schedule of eastbound* MULE. *After such discussions, Amtrak will decide whether to have Board approve the service, to start up with April timetable change.*

■ *Manhattan Westside Connection: Project to cost $55 million; Amtrak's share is $30 million. Amtrak not yet assured the state will come up with its $25 million share, but if all goes well operations will start in 1987.*

■ *Atlantic City: Legislation requires it start by Sep 1985. Startup date can be met if New Jersey gets DOT certification that it has met the 40% non-Federal funding requirement.*

■ *Daily* EAGLE: *Amtrak should know soon if a daily train in the Christmas season would be financially successful. Trying to round up enought Superliner cars for it.*

■ *Daily* SUNSET: *Not enough Superliner cars for it. It's Amtrak's weakest long distance route, partly because of blanketing by discount air carriers.....*

★★★

NEW TICKET OFFICE has been opened by Amtrak in New York, its third in Manhattan, at 1 East 59th St, near the Plaza Hotel. Others are in Rockefeller Plaza and in the downtown World Trade Center.....

THREE NEW STATIONS will open in October–Anaheim CA (Oct 30), New Carrollton MD (Oct 30) and Huntington WV (mid-October).....

THE RUMOR MILL: There is talk of a trip with steam engine 4449 from Portland to New Orleans for the World's Fair in 1984. Brochures for the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition are out, and they include a drawing of a monorail running around the exposition site, a la the Seattle World's Fair in 1962.....

News in this issue is updated thru October 15, 1983.

Carl Loucks

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What's Doing at Beech Grove

A Look at Amtrak's Repair & Maintenance Shops

The following is a correction to a report appearing here last issue: The report on the track inspection car being built out of Amcoach 21222 became garbled. The sentence beginning "Large bay windows..." to the end of the paragraph are descriptive of Conrail's new instrument car, not the Amtrak car, the construction of which had not yet advanced very far at the time of the report. Also, in the same column last issue, car "Silver Tulip" is not a dome, tho it is indeed safely at Beech Grove, and not scrapped, as some reports had it.

A 2-month old Beech Grove report lists the following 17 cars as being ready for retirement, with authority received from Amtrak to ditch them:

1070, 1098, 1142, 1146, 1148, 1199, 1533, 1800, 2155, 2382, 2445, 3209, 3365, 3901, 3921, 6009 and 17088.

SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA (continued from page 16)

in this legislative movement.) Laxalt has the following telephone numbers: Washington DC: 202-224-3542; Reno: 702-784-5568; Carson City: 702-883-1930; Las Vegas: 702-385-6547. Laxalt's Reno staff in late September said that they had received "many calls" about the matter.

Senator Laxalt in letters last month to Amtrak President Claytor and DOT Secretary Dole said "Given the positive benefits that would result from this new service, I urge you to initiate the route as soon as possible. Realistically, it could bring in 30,000 more tourists each year to northern Nevada while returning twice the current revenues."

CARS & CONSISTS

*EAGLE, train 21, Chicago Sep 18: engines 360, 305; cars 1221, 2881, 39910, 32060, 39974, 34062, 34099, 38031, 34025, 31006, 31003, 31034 (last 3 cars off at St. Louis).

*SUNSET LIMITED, train 2, San Antonio Sep 19: engines 704, 719; cars 1167, 39902, 31004, 32038, 38033, 34045.

*LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 449, Boston Sep 24: engine 207; cars 21041, 1269, 1223, 2983, 25096, 25093, 28017.

*CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, train 6, Omaha Sep 18: engines 358, 364; cars 1230, 1222, 39906, 32032, 32068, 33023, 31001, 34043, 34087, 34039, 32003, 34037, 32041. Same, train 5, Chicago Sep 25: engines 358, 364; cars 1157, 1155, 39906, 32032, 32068, 38026, 33023, 31015, 34043, 34087, 34099, 32058, 34038, 32041.

*SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA, train 15, Oakland Sep 17: engine 233; cars 1127, 2995 "Pine Brook", 2996 "Pine Hill", 28304 Amlounge (labelled Amdinette), 21872, 21823.

AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES for August are given on the adjoining page. Amtrak made up these figures in a new format this time. Besides the ridership data, revenues for each route are shown, and compared with August 1982. Ridership and revenue figures are given in thousands; thus, Metroliner ridership for Aug 83 was 80,778 (for the ridership columns, substitute a comma for the decimal). Metroliner revenue for Aug 83 should be read as $2,801,400. Overall ridership for August was up 1.61% from last year. July figures appeared in RTN 275.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Oct 22-30: American Southeast by Rail tour, Michigan to Florida and Washington DC. $850. America by Rail, 16168 Center Rd, East Lansing MI 48823. (517) 339-8854.

Oct 29: Last run of the GG1. Matawan NJ rail station, sponsored by NJ Transit. Welcome ceremony 9:30am; trains depart 10am & 1pm. Souvenirs on sale. Souvenir ticket $1.

Send large SASE when responding to listings. One Rail Fnatrips listing is free. Send info to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

EXPRESS ADS

AMTRAK–VIA RAIL CANADA–EURAIL PASS–OCEAN LINER CRUISES–RAIL TOURS–RAIL EXCURSIONS–CHARTER RAIL CARS. Arrangements by phone or appointment–use your credit card–tickets mailed promptly. A fully appointed travel agency with masters of ship and rail travel. GREAT WESTERN TOURS, Sheraton Palace Hotel, Suite 900, 639 Market Street, San Francisco CA 94105. (415) 398-2994.

DINING CAR CHINA, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, stationery, rules, metal & Pullman items, annual reports. Many railroads. Long 37¢ stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, KS 67213. Will buy items.

GISELLE'S TRAVEL CORP at 1215 4th St. Sacramento CA 95814, Phone: (916) 446-1211 offers rail tickets on AMTRAK–VIA(CANADA)–EURAILPASS along with tours and accommodations in cities to which you are traveling. Let Giselle's help you take your next memorable rail trip.

COME! Ride the railways of the world with "The International Railway Traveler." IRT is a unique, bimonthly mini-magazine which explores modern rail travel world-wide, from Spain to Siberia, Norway to New Zealand. Regular subscription is $15; $10 special, limited-time offer to NARP and Transport 2000 members. Sample copy $2.50. Write IRT, Dept R, P.O. Box 35067, Louisville, KY 40232. (502) 456-1028.

ATTENTION PASSENGER TRAIN FANS: Available now, "Dining on Rails", the complete book on dining car china showing 580 patterns and over 900 photos. Book includes many passenger train ads, recipes, train photos and illustrated with the best of passenger train artwork. You don't need to be a china collector to enjoy "Dining on Rails." Available for Christmas; order today. Send check or money order for $43.95 postpaid. RK Publishing, 3875 Eaton St., Denver CO 80212.

WHAT IS the AMTRAK board's legal authority for their refusal to comply with the audit and account provisions of secs. 9105, 9107, title 31, United States Code??

"Issues in American Rail Travel", RTN's little book on important problems with America's rail passenger revival, is almost ready for publication. Price will be $4.50, which includes relevant tax & postage. Full details will be given later in RTN. PO Box 9007, Berkeley 94709.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads cost just $1.00 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads are only $1.25 per square inch. RTN, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES

AUGUST, 1983 – See page 22 for further explanation

ROUTE	DESCRIPTION	RIDERSHIP (000 S) AUG 82	AUG 83	PERCENT CHANGE	REVENUE (000 S) AUG 82	AUG 83	PERCENT CHANGE
NORTHEAST CORRIDOR							
01	METROLINERS	71.841	80.778	12.44	$ 2,390.9	$ 2,801.4	17.17
02	NEW YORK-WASHINGTON	173.008	156.524	(9.53)	2,481.3	2,604.8	4.98
03	BOSTON-WASHINGTON	233.996	232.869	(.48)	4,714.2	4,937.4	4.73
06	BOSTON-NEW YORK	12.628		(100.00)	225.0		(100.00)
07	NEW ENGLAND METROS		5.391	.00		215.6	.00
09	BOSTON-PHILADELPHIA	56.544	29.857	(47.20)	624.4	446.4	(28.50)
10	WASHINGTON-SPRINGFIELD	51.867	52.846	1.89	885.9	972.0	9.71
12	NEW HAVEN-SPRINGFIELD	17.148	20.432	19.15	104.6	110.0	5.18
13	NEW YORK-PHILADELPHIA	163.673	203.840	24.54	573.6	1,026.3	78.92
14	PHILADELPHIA-HARRISBURG	63.786	61.555	(3.50)	355.7	378.8	6.49
42	NEW YORK-HARRISBURG	22.136	22.117	(.09)	192.8	249.5	29.37
	TOTAL NEC	866.627	866.209	(.05)	$ 12,548.5	$ 13,742.2	9.51
SHORT DISTANCE							
15	NYC-ALBANY-NIAGARA FALLS	72.055	74.206	2.99	$ 1,628.7	$ 1,673.2	2.73
20	CHICAGO-ST LOUIS	27.788	28.082	1.06	560.1	583.9	4.24
21	CHICAGO-MILWAUKEE	14.244	14.536	2.05	137.3	148.5	8.19
22	CHICAGO-DETROIT-TOLEDO	35.750	39.513	10.53	690.6	755.7	9.43
23	CHICAGO-CARBONDALE	12.455	12.115	(2.73)	236.1	234.5	(.68)
24	CHICAGO-QUINCY	6.322	6.672	5.54	125.0	130.3	4.26
35	LOS ANGELES-SAN DIEGO	127.101	133.469	5.01	1,117.9	1,233.8	10.36
36	SEATTLE-PORTLAND	5.203	5.275	1.38	69.8	68.8	(1.55)
38	WASHINGTON-MARTINSBURG	14.859	14.064	(5.35)	45.6	48.4	6.18
39	OAKLAND-BAKERSFIELD	20.248	22.473	10.99	342.4	408.2	19.20
40	NYC-ALBANY-MONTREAL	12.459	10.801	(13.31)	372.1	332.5	(10.66)
41	CHICAGO-PT HURON, TORONTO)	9.908	13.085	32.07	217.3	312.0	43.56
44	MINNEAPOLIS-DULUTH	18.333	12.903	(29.62)	220.0	161.6	(26.54)
53	CHICAGO-VALPARAISO	20.627	18.948	(8.14)	49.5	43.2	(12.77)
54	CHICAGO-INDIANAPOLIS	6.681	6.853	2.57	121.1	139.4	15.12
56	CHICAGO-STL-KANSAS CITY	13.473	13.098	(2.78)	244.2	249.9	2.34
57	PHILADELPHIA-PITTSBURGH	9.239	7.680	(16.87)	161.6	158.0	(2.23)
58	PORTLAND-EUGENE			.00			.00
61	LOS ANGELES-SACRAMENTO	8.556	10.423	21.82	253.2	312.3	23.33
62	MIAMI-TAMPA		4.185	.00		86.7	.00
	TOTAL SHORT DISTANCE	435.301	448.381	3.00	$ 6,592.6	$ 7,080.8	7.41
LONG DISTANCE							
04	WASHINGTON-MONTREAL	18.795	15.351	(18.32)	$ 932.6	$ 740.1	(20.65)
16	NEW YORK-FLORIDA	68.226	71.253	4.44	4,228.2	4,619.4	9.25
17	CHICAGO-NYC/WASHINGTON	30.091	32.470	7.91	1,729.0	1,802.6	4.26
18	CHICAGO-WASHINGTON-NYC	10.469	9.979	(4.68)	461.4	475.3	3.02
25	CHICAGO-SEATTLE	50.805	55.883	10.00	3,664.6	4,081.9	11.39
27	CHICAGO-OAKLAND, SFO)	37.712	44.697	18.52	3,243.2	3,350.0	3.29
28	CHICAGO-LOS ANGELES	34.753	32.073	(7.71)	3,012.8	2,760.1	(8.39)
30	CHICAGO-NEW ORLEANS	22.490	21.941	(2.44)	1,166.0	1,161.4	(.39)
32	CHICAGO-TEXAS	13.032	11.756	(9.79)	920.4	930.7	1.12
33	LOS ANGELES-NEW ORLEANS	10.623	10.187	(4.10)	893.2	841.5	(5.79)
34	LOS ANGELES-SEATTLE	57.883	60.342	4.25	2,586.6	2,944.9	13.85
45	CHICAGO-NYC/BOSTON	39.356	44.292	12.54	2,072.3	2,219.9	7.12
47	BOSTON-NEWPORT NEWS	9.582	9.642	.63	284.3	300.7	5.77
48	NEW YORK-SAVANNAH	20.054	19.000	(5.26)	1,061.3	1,049.2	(1.14)
49	SEATTLE-SALT LAKE CTY/CHI	18.019	16.639	(7.66)	943.5	1,054.1	11.72
52	NEW YORK-NEW ORLEANS	30.301	32.693	7.89	1,919.1	2,018.8	5.20
60	LOS ANGELES/OGDEN-CHICAGO	14.717	13.506	(8.23)	1,160.3	1,146.3	(1.20)
	TOTAL LONG DISTANCE	486.908	501.704	3.04	$ 30,278.8	$ 31,496.7	4.02
99	SPECIAL TRAINS	3.500	4.936	41.03	$ 129.2	$ 93.1	(27.93)
	SYSTEM TOTAL	1,792.336	1,821.230	1.61	$ 49,549.1	$ 52,412.8	5.78